

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 23, 2019

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

We write to you to express concern about actions taken by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to revoke guidance welcoming lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth into the 4-H organization. Previous public facing documents, entitled “4-H Guidance for Inclusion of All Gender Identities, Gender Expressions, Sexual Orientation, and Sexes,” stated that the organization was “committed to being inclusive and welcoming of all forms of diversity.” These are goals that we support and believe would benefit all 4-H participants.

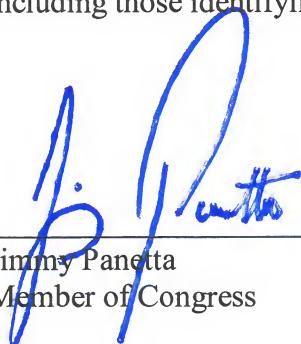
Reports indicate that a former USDA senior official directed the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) to rescind guidance developed by 4-H staff which outlined how the organization could best support LGBTQ youth. Disruptive actions like this send a clear and harmful message to the over six million 4-H members that LGBTQ youth are not welcome in the organization.

As Members of Congress who support the LGBTQ community and youth development programs like 4-H, we believe these actions represent inappropriate USDA overreach into 4-H inclusivity efforts and are detrimental to current and future LGBTQ participants. To better understand why this action was taken, we respectfully request answers to the following questions:

1. Did you, in your role as Secretary of Agriculture, direct this action? If not, who at USDA directed the rescission of this guidance?
2. When were you first made aware of this decision?
3. What was the impetus for rescinding this published guidance?
4. What internal process did USDA follow prior to asking NIFA and 4-H to rescind this pro-LGBTQ guidance?
5. What is USDA’s stance on the participation of LGBTQ youth in 4-H?
6. Would USDA be supportive of issuing nationwide LGBTQ nondiscrimination guidance that is similar to the document titled “4-H Guidance for Inclusion of All Gender Identities, Gender Expressions, Sexual Orientation, and Sexes” which was previously rescinded?

USDA has a strong history of supporting the next generation of agriculturalists and community leaders through youth programming. Your department has the opportunity to continue that work

for the LGBTQ youth currently participating in 4-H across the country. However, these actions by USDA run counter to that goal, and they must be reversed. We believe that USDA leadership should be working to support LGBTQ youth in 4-H instead of removing guidance that welcomes their involvement and ensures their protection. We look forward to receiving your responses within 90 days from the date of this letter and working together to ensure that all youth, including those identifying as LGBTQ, are accepted in 4-H.



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress

Sincerely,



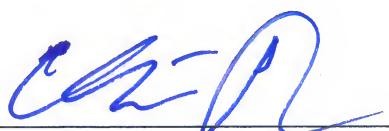
Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



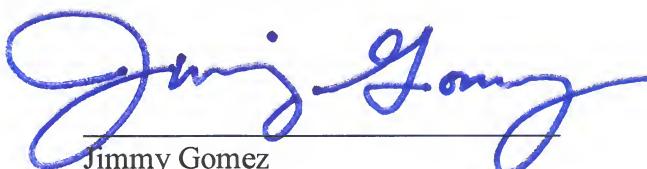
Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress



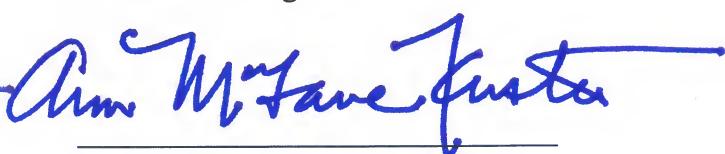
Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



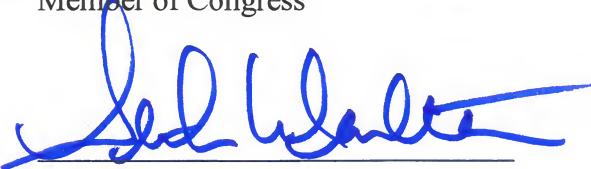
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



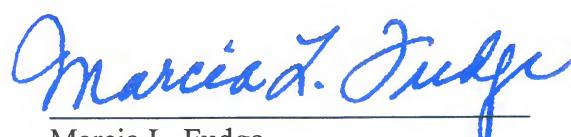
Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress



Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress



Mark Takano
Member of Congress



Tom O'Halleran
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Bonnie Watson Coleman

Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

Daniel T. Kildee

Dan Kildee
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Peter Welch
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Ro Khanna
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Yvette D. Clarke

Yvette D. Clarke
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Grace F. Napolitano

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Andy Levin

Andy Levin
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Jackie Speier

Jackie Speier
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Rosa L. DeLauro

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Zoe Lofgren

Zoe Lofgren
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Abby Finkenauer

Abby Finkenauer
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Alcee L. Hastings

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

Tim Ryan

Tim Ryan
Member of Congress

Hank Johnson

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

Katie Porter

Katie Porter
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

Chris Pappas

Chris Pappas
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

Mike Quigley

Mike Quigley
Member of Congress

AbndLowenthal

Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

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Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

Debbie Wasserman Shultz

Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress

Ailem Vela

Ailem Vela
Member of Congress

Charlie Crist

Charlie Crist
Member of Congress

Jared Huffman

Jared Huffman
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Earl Blumenauer

Earl Blumenauer
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Angie Craig

Angie Craig
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Julia Brownley

Julia Brownley
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Raúl M. Grijalva

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Dave Loebsack

Dave Loebsack
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Linda T. Sánchez

Linda T. Sánchez
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Jim Himes

Jim Himes
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Raja Krishnamoorthi

Raja Krishnamoorthi
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Frederica Wilson

Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress

Lucille Roybal-Allard

Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

Deb Haaland

Deb Haaland
Member of Congress

Katie Hill

Katie Hill
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Al Lawson

Al Lawson
Member of Congress

Jose E. Serrano

Jose E. Serrano
Member of Congress

David Scott

David Scott
Member of Congress

Derek Kilmer

Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress

Ann Kirkpatrick

Ann Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler

Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

Robert C. "Bobby" Scott

Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress

Betty McCollum

Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

Alma Adams

Alma Adams
Member of Congress

Mary Gay Scanlon

Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress